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A MOTHER IN HEAVEN.

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Baker

18295

A MOTHER IN HEAVEN.

The chord in the human heart that vibrates most tenderly — the memory of the soul that lies deepest and is sweetest — rises and thrills at the very mention of the name of Mother. Such great honor and blessing hath God bestowed upon Woman.

BY

JEROME PAINE BATES,

EDITOR, AND AUTHOR OF "THE IMPERIAL HIGHWAY," "ISSUES OF THE CAMPAIGN," ETC., ETC.

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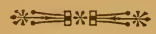
In Memoriam.*



PURE, sainted one in world above—
The home of joy and light and love—
Could I throw down life's heavy load
And upward mount to thine abode;
Could I behold thy new-found youth,
Its angel beauty, fair as truth,
With not a wrinkle or defect,
The faultless form of God's elect;
Could I come near thee in that land
And grasp again your outstretched hand;
With soul forlorn, your blessing seek
And print a kiss on rounded cheek;
Lean throbbing head on peaceful breast
And feel once more its sweet, full rest;
Raise swimming eyes to thy dear face,
Enwreathed in smiles and tender grace—

How would our raptured spirits beat,
What words of cheer would each repeat?

---

*These lines are reminiscent and commemorative of Mrs. Delinda Grow Bates, who died at Thompson, Conn., Christmas morning, 1888, aged 85. It is essential to remember these facts in order to understand the allusions of the poem.

Would'st thou inquire for old-time friends,
With eagerness that absence lends?
Or does freed soul no more delight
Itself in those beyond its sight?
Has the old love that filled thy heart
No place midst joys of nobler part?

O mother dear, I'll not believe
That thou for us no more wilt grieve;
I will not think of thee as lost
To love of children, tempest-tost
On life's rough billows, rolling high,
And lifting up a fruitless cry;
I will not dream of help denied
While struggling hard against the tide.

It would, indeed, be passing strange
If death could bring so great a change
That you would spurn me, should I kneel
And seek in tears the old-time zeal.

No, rather let me be assured
That when by evil ways allured,
I have above a guardian guide
Whose circling love will e'er abide.
With no misgivings, let me know
That through my pilgrimage below,
Thy heart is watchful still and true,
And ever keeps me full in view.

II.

WHEN I was told that you had gone
And left me orphaned and alone,
I could not mourn; for flight from pain
Was such relief and glorious gain.

In your surroundings now and when
On earth, what wondrous change! For then,
A weak, emaciate, feeble one;
Now, clothed in likeness of God's Son.
When body dies and not the soul,
Dropping the flesh but makes it whole.

Bare poverty exchanged for wealth;
For wasting sickness, robust health;
For rending anguish, healing joy,
For sinking death, life's sweet employ.
As earth grew dim, your sky grew bright;
When night closed in, there still was light
Above the clouds, beyond the roar
Of beating billows on the shore.

When clouded eyes refused to see,
Then nobler sight began to be;
When palsied lips refused to speak,
Angelic pinions brushed thy cheek.
And when at last life's wheels stood still,
And pulseless heart no more could fill
The veins with blood, the brain with dreams,
'Twas then thy soul caught advance gleams
Of things which never know decay,

Of glory fading not away,
Of fruitful palms that cast no shade,
Of fair green fields whose every blade
Of waving foliage rich and rare,
Made perfume for the balmy air.

From lowly couch to palace hall
Brought quick release from aged thrall;
From helpless want to marriage feast,
Where Christ is first and none are least;
Where wedding garments, freely given,
Prepare for entrance into heaven—
All these transitions, quick as thought,
Came with redemption Christ had bought,
And which you all through life had sought.

O tell me, Mother, did you meet
While walking up the golden street,
Your consort, who long years before,
Had passed in through the open door?
Did father, mother, sisters three,
Reach out glad hands to welcome thee?
Did Abram, Moses, Paul and John,
With kindly looks, beckon thee on?
Did angel convoy bear thee straight
Through realms of space to pearly gate?
Did God himself, as King alone,
Receive thee on his royal throne?

Methinks I see thy beaming eyes
Ray out their great and glad surprise,
As glory-visions, one by one,

With consciousness of victory won,
Fill thee with happiness divine,
And make each radiant feature shine.

Then came the crowning scene of all,
When through the brilliant jeweled hall,
The Father's voice rang sweet and clear,
Saying in words that all might hear:
" Well done, tried soul, faithful and good,
Enter thou in to full sainthood;
You kept the faith, and loved your Lord,
Let robes and crown be thy reward."

III.

YOUR life in heaven has not been long,
Not more than learned the ransomed song,
But even now, I hear thee say
" Amidst these scenes I choose to stay.
Call me not back to sinful earth,
Which gave me death, and gave me birth,
So poor and mean seems all its wealth,
Fleeting honors and fading health,
I would not change my present lot
For richest prize or fairest spot.

" On high, there's nothing poor or bad;
No hurtful things to make one sad;
No heat to blight, no winds to chill,

No pains to soothe, no cries to still.
Instead, a calm ecstatic peace,
Fullness of life with no surcease;
Abounding health and honors high,
Riches that have no wings to fly.

"No eye hath seen, no ear hath heard,
No flight of fancy, like a bird,
E'er touched the height of joys that come
To souls which gain this glorious home.

"No language that I know can tell
Of things which now around me dwell;
Beautiful things like those which seem
So wonderful in fairy dream.
Entrancing views with music sweet,
Grand waves of harmony which meet
And mount, then sink to cadence low
That falls as soft as falling snow.

"No human chorus ever trilled
Such melody as through me thrilled
When first I joined the shining choir,
And touched the strings of golden lyre.
The Saviour, pleased, among us walked,
And of still brighter glories talked,
Then led us out midst blooming trees
That gently swayed with passing breeze;
Through gardens filled with flowers rare,
Breathing the pure delicious air,
Beside still waters, deep and wide,
Which through the landscapes noiseless glide.

"O what a happy life is this!
My being palpitates with bliss.
No wants to feed, no rest to crave,
No transient joys one tries to save,
No aching heart or weary head,
No dragging toil, no shrinking dread.

"The contrast in respect to power
Is greater than the blissful dower.
When clogged with clay no soul can rise
Above its lot, nor sever ties
That bind it fast in irksome chains,
Whose links are losses, crosses, pains.

"Compelled to live in one small place,
Compelled to run a halting race,
I could not move beyond my range
Nor bring about a wished-for change.
My old earth-life was ever filled
With things I did not like, and stilled
Were all my cries for higher good,
By cares and woes, a swarming brood.
For fourscore years and five, my mind
Was cramped and hindered and confined;
The good I would, I could not do,
As means were scant, and chances few.

"But now the universe of space
Is mine; I go to any place
I wish. On spirit wings I soar
To any planet, any shore,
To starry orb, or island grot—

There is no distant unknown spot.
As will and motion are the same,
Effort is little more than name.

"Below us we discern the earth,
A place now held of little worth,
And precious only as the sphere
Where Christ was born and souls are dear.

"The spirit-body saints receive
Is not what many would believe;
For flesh and blood, like willful sin,
To this pure world enter not in.
Neither do thoughts which spring from sex
Divert the mind or life perplex.
Our love is calm, intense and still,
Entirely free from passion's thrill;
No men or women here are known,
But all are angels round the throne.

"We neither hunger, thirst nor tire,
We feel no need of shade or fire;
Our clothing is a robe of light
Gauzy, cloud-like, pliant and white.
More volatile than ambient air
We move through space and blessings bear
To struggling ones not yet released,
Whose fight with woes hath not yet ceased.

"For self we never know a fear,
Nor ever shed a bitter tear;
The power that holds the orbs in space
Keeps us secure in every place.

What Jesus was when from the grave
He rose to conquer and to save,
E'en such will all his children be
Who join him by the crystal sea."

* * * * * * * *

Hold, mother dear, pray tell no more,
Or else we'll wish this life were o'er;
Let thought come back to work and care,
And leave thee with the glory there.

IV.

IN future days remembrance glad
Shall cheer the hours when I am sad,
By bringing back thy former life
As christian parent, faithful wife.

'Twill be a source of constant joy
While daily tasks my hands employ,
That of thee I'm not quite bereft,
As power to bless me still is left.

Your form and presence are removed,
But that you live is clearly proved
By words of Christ in Holy Writ,
Saying that saints on thrones shall sit.
They truly live because He lives,
As vine to branch its being gives.

I cannot think thee far away,
Or that you fled from us to stay;
No sense of distance intervenes
Between souls here and future scenes,
When in communion both unite
And make the sky one path of light.
If any change indeed there be,
It is that you are nearer me
Than when on earth; for now thy power
Can reach and bless me every hour.

The veil which hides thee from my view
Is thin as mist, or morning dew,
When faith is strong, and love is bold,
And hope's sure anchor takes fast hold.

The dearest, sweetest, purest thing
Which life to any soul can bring,
Is love of mother for her child,
So constant, merciful and mild.
I never thought of it so much
Until I missed its healing touch;
I never prized its radiant worth
Until I wandered o'er the earth.

But now when lonely days I see
I'll think of all you were to me,
And call to mind the old-time hours
I spent in childhood's fairy bowers.

V.

IN humble cottage by the road,
Our homestead and long-time abode,
Thy care sustained my budding life,
And hushed in peace all boyish strife.

How clearly outlined on my brain
Those days which ne'er can come again!
In panorama they pass by
While I look on with love-lit eye:

A square-built house, solid and old,
Which held more furniture than gold;
A shop hard by, a corn-crib small,
That formed two parts of garden wall;
A moss-grown well with swinging sweep,
That brought up water cool and deep;
A brook that through green meadows ran,
Twisting about as small brooks can;
A bare and ample kitchen floor
That stretched back from the large south door;
A big fireplace with flagstone hearth,
Whose ruddy light gave cheerful birth
To teeming fancies, day-dreams wild,
Which bless the heart of every child;
A climbing vine on south-east front,
Where berries grew and birds were wont
To come and snatch them, all alert
Lest childish hands should bring them hurt;
An ancient clock, full eight feet tall,

Standing like sentry 'gainst the wall,
That tolled the measured beats of time,
And with our thoughts made mocking rhyme;
A barn, where cattle munched their hay,
Stored away in capacious bay;
A scaffold high, where fowls would fly,
And hide their nests so wise and sly;
A landscape broad of hill and dale,
Hazy with Autumn's misty veil;
Huge branching trees and forests grand,
That flecked and dotted all the land;
A winding roadway up and down,
That led to school, to church, and town;
A brooding stillness over all,
Unbroken save by friendly call—

Oh, how these trooping pictures run
Across the canvas one by one!
Oh, how distinctly are they seen
Like photographs on magic screen!

Then, too, in winter evenings long,
When round the fire the family throng
Gathered with pen, and slate, and book,
You, in our midst, so grave would look
O'er massive "specs," half down the nose,
Giving your face peculiar pose.
In rocker large near candle-stand,
I see thee, knitting work in hand,
While father nods in his low chair,
And firelight phantoms dance in air.
Sometimes when howling blasts did blow,

And outer world was wrapt in snow,
Down the dark cellar two would go,
Feeling our way, cautious and slow,
As light was dim and ground was rough
With stones and boards and garden stuff.

Apples and cider soon were found
And carried back with nimble bound.
The pan of fruit, greenings and red,
Put motion into every head,
While cider mugs with foaming top
Were drained of each last beaded drop.
The pop-corn snapped upon the stove,
The shagbark walnuts from the grove
Were cracked and meated with a zest,
While talk and laughter, song and jest,
Made merry hours for one and all
Better than heated dance or ball.

These home-like, farm-like joys that came
In days of old, left no sad shame
To rankle in the mind and heart;
Of higher life they formed a part
And that was all; not as an end
Were they pursued, but to unbend
The tightened strain of anxious care,
And lessen labor's grinding wear.

When bed-time came we ran up stairs
Where many childish ghosts had lairs
Around the chamber, rough and rude,
And where the wide stone-chimney stood.

You followed where our footsteps led,
And tucked us up in ice-cold bed,
But with such kindly look and word
That grateful hearts within us stirred.

VI.

WHILE being lasts I'll not forget
I owe to thee a boundless debt;
And though I never can repay,
I'll crown thee with this humble lay.

My life itself was thy great gift;
You pushed my little bark adrift;
If love had failed, I had not been
Nor floated to this world of sin.

You stilled my wailing infant cries,
You kissed the tears from weeping eyes,
Rocked me to sleep on peaceful breast,
And laid me down to dreamless rest.

You taught my lips to speak thy name,
You roused within a thirst for fame,
You watched my growing mind unfold,
With anxious care that ne'er was told.
From every view, which way I turn,
Thy work and worth I still discern.

But chief among thy virtues rare,
Was perfect faith in God and prayer.
Religion made thee wise and strong,
And gave to life its noblest song.

The Bible was thy constant friend,
No other book such peace could lend;
Its words of hope and love you read,
Prefacing each with—"And God said."
No questionings were ever thine,
That every chapter, every line
That book contained were all divine,
And truth's bright ore from heavenly mine.

How worn that Testament you used!
How often o'er its contents mused!
Thy loyal love made duty kind,
And brought reward to willing mind.

Of many worldly things denied,
You closer pressed to Jesus' side;
To do God's will was richer food
Than any other earthly good.
How many times I watched thy face
When, fresh from God's own hiding-place,
Thy soul had dwelt so long above,
Its very features glowed with love.
No wonder that when death drew nigh,
And life grew dark beneath the sky,
You still could whisper in our ears,
"Jesus fails not; I have no fears."*

* Her last words sent back from the borders of Beulah.

VII.

A preacher's daughter once thyself,
You valued preachers more than pelf;
Their hymns and sermons, like strong wings,
Bore up thy soul toward higher things.

Much company you never sought
Unless 'twas filled with pious thought;
The pomp and pride of gaudy dress
You spurned for robe of righteousness.

A paper, book, or magazine
Were in thy hands but seldom seen;
The Bible held for thee such lore
You had no wish or time for more.

To do your work from day to day,
Gave little space for idle play;
Yet mirth and fun, when work was done,
Gladdened our home for every one.
You had no frown for hearty laugh,
(Although you often called it "chaff,")
And thy large frame would heave and shake
At sport the boys and girls would make.
Still mirthfulness was held in check,
Lest higher good it might shipwreck.

That life we lived in olden time,
A mixture was, like prose and rhyme;
It might be styled a bitter-sweet,
As wide extremes did often meet,

And cruel thorns made bleeding feet.
But midst it all one star shone bright,
A mother's love which knew no night;
In joy or sorrow still the same,
A beacon light, an altar flame.

* * * * * * * *

Of many trials, one you had
Concerned your youngest little lad,
Whom you designed for pulpit work,
But which he always tried to shirk.

Urged on by you he sought to do
What first was hard, and harder grew
As years brought out inaptitude,
And obstacles his pathway strewed.

The youth was stubborn, quick and proud,
And with misgivings deep he bowed
His head to vows of service true,
That ordination round him threw.

He preached and prayed as best he could,
He labored long to do some good,
But found at last his heart and mind
For more congenial service pined.
And so, unable to endure
The woes and ills he could not cure,
He left the pulpit, took his pen,
And never entered desk again.

This action nearly broke thy heart;
You could not bear to see him part

From that straight path you chose for him,
And made him choose the same, or sin.

We always thought your motive right,
And that, according to the light
You then enjoyed, you sought the best
For him and all, at love's behest.
Though now, I think, you clearly see
That such a course was not to be.

Nor this alone, but many more
Dark puzzling things and crosses sore
That you on earth so patient bore,
Are now explained by wiser lore.
Light and knowledge of wider scope
Throw back on life a brighter hope.

It was indeed a great mistake
Which burning zeal for Jesus' sake
Led you unconsciously to make.

VIII.

NO grade of old New England life
Could long exist without some strife,
Or war of words, o'er jarring creeds
Which in God's garden grow like weeds.

The church and what it taught, were then
The chart and guide of all good men.
And Sunday with its change and rest,

Was day of all the week the best.
But scent for heresy was keen
As ever in old Spain was seen;
Unsound in faith was quite as bad
As if a person had gone mad.

And so I recollect full well
How earnestly your mind would dwell
On themes and doctrines of God's word
Which you at church from preachers heard.

Sometimes at home debate ran high,
And then "old Adam's" fur would fly;
Sometimes the talk took milder form,
And great peace followed after storm.

In fact, theology was all
I heard or knew, till from the thrall
Of home and farm I burst away,
And sailed out on a broader bay.
Religion formed the warp and woof
Of all the talk beneath our roof.
The fear of God was high restraint
For youthful sinner, aged saint.

The breakfast done, we all sat still,
And turned our thoughts toward Zion's hill;
While father read from book or psalm
Of Shepherd good who shields from harm.
Then lowly knees to floor were bent,
And fervent pleadings upward sent
That God would guide us through the day,
Nor let us from his counsels stray.

A Christian home! what tongue can tell
How potent is that wondrous spell
It weaves around the youthful heart
Keeping it safe with kindly art.

A Christian mother! who that knows
How far her subtle influence goes?
Or how in after life she molds
The destiny her love enfolds?

Beloved one! I freely own
Before the world and blazing throne,
Your life and words did more to bless,
Than hope of wealth, or love's caress.
In dark temptation's fiercest hour,
Grappling with sin's destructive power,
One thought of thee would make me weep,
And start the cry, "God save and keep."

IX.

YOUR stay with us was longer than
The usual length of life's short span;
And longer far than you desired,
As age came on, and soul grew tired.

But it was well; example's force
Is riveted by length of course;
Besides, God's word was verified

That saints who in his love abide,
Shall with long life be satisfied.

Old age, however, did not bring
Thee any joys like those which spring
From younger days, but rather woe;
For wan disease, perverse and slow,
Fastened upon thy worn-out frame,
And made life hardly worth the name.

Ideal age that lives in song,
Might almost tempt one to live long;
But four-score years with burdens such
As spring from weakness, and the touch
Of chill and frost and failing powers—
These are not life's happiest hours.

When eyes grow dim and hearing thick,
And failing flesh feels faint and sick;
*When bitter almonds are one's food,
And insect troubles like a brood
Rise up and darken sun and moon,
And turn to night the brightest noón;
When grinders cease because so few,
And morning dawns with no moist dew;
When storms come on, and clouds return,
And hope lies buried in its urn;
When keepers shake because so weak,
And pallor seizes brow and cheek,
And music's daughters silence seek;

*The imagery of this stanza is taken from Ecclesiastes, xii. chapter.

When sleep forsakes the restless bed
And makes the brain wish it were dead;
When e'en desire gives out, and fears
Bring blighting thoughts and blinding tears;
When silver cord begins to shake,
And golden bowl begins to break;
When at life's fountain, pitcher drops,
And wheel at cistern slows and stops—
Old age is then not what it seems
When viewed through fancy's golden beams.

To be laid by and feel no worth,
Crouched down in corner of the hearth,
Knowing that each new dragging day
Makes more unbearable one's stay
Amidst surroundings from which rise
No light to gladden longing eyes,
Is no great boon to Christian mind
Which pants to leave the world behind,
And seek a city, fair and broad,
Whose builder is a gracious God.

X.

THY life and death were both ordained;
To such belief I am constrained
By rare and striking circumstance
Which did not spring from wayward chance.

God kept thee with us till a day,
Made sacred by angelic lay,
Dawned on thy spirit, glad to leave
A world which often made it grieve,
And crumbling tenement of clay
Fit only to be laid away.

As chrysalis its vesture sheds,
And bright new wings, upspringing, spreads,
So thy freed soul, as newly-born,
Entered heaven on Christmas morn.

Christmas with God—how rich the thought!
How full of gifts and joy unbought!
To be where poverty's sad face
Mars not the hallowed hour and place;
Where disappointment ne'er is known;
Where gifts abounding, like a zone
Of wealth and light and joy serene,
Make life one endless festive scene.

O Mother, I would gladly know,
If, in that land where spirits go,
The angels and archangels bright,
Remember that Judean night,
When to the waiting shepherds came,
The sign of God in starry flame?
Does music celebrate the day
When in the manger Mary lay
Her godlike babe, before whom bowed
The wise men and the wondering crowd?
Did silver bells ring out glad chimes?
Did air resound with happy rhymes

Sung by gatherings round the throne,
With no one absent or alone?

Did spirits watch from heavenly heights
The merry earth ablaze with lights?
Did sounds of cordial greeting reach
The upper courts like distant speech,
Or murm'ring waves on ocean beach?

Thy Christmas gifts were harp and crown.
At God's right hand thou didst sit down
On throne of gold to praise the grace,
Which brought thee to that happy place.
Then while such fruits as angels share,
Grown only in that purer air
On trees of life, around were laid,
Entrancing notes rich music made.

More blest than we on earth can be,
Thy Christmas joy was like a sea
Vast and unbounded—not as here
Where Christmas comes but once a year.
The knowledge that this feast of love
Would ne'er break up, or tiresome prove,
Gave added zest to perfect hours
Enjoyed amidst perennial bowers.

That life of joy can never die;
No disappointed painful cry
Will e'er escape thy lips again;
But one eternal, blest, "amen"
Shall banish all disturbing care
Like benediction after prayer.

XI.

NOW, mother, I must end this song
And leave thee with that happy throng;
Leave thee at rest with angel band
Inhabiting the better land.

In deepest heart I feel it true
That while you are now hid from view,
The real distance is not great,
As upper world to this is mate.

God is so good and great and just,
His promises invite my trust;
To them I'll cling, and hope at last
To join thee when this life is past.

O Father, Saviour, hear this plea!
Direct, inspire and shelter me;
Let mother's holy faith be mine,
And my heart's love shall all be thine.

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